

## LIFE TOGETHER SERMON SERIES

### Week 1: The Church As The Family Of God

#### Acts 2:42-47

In Acts 2, we read that the church gathering itself was a meal. It doesn't say that they ate a meal before or after the main event; it says that the meal itself was the main event. A sign that the Holy Spirit is at work in a church isn't just thousands of people coming to faith, or prophecy, or healing, or even miracles, it's this: people eat together like family.

This family of God is not a social club or a group of friends who look, think, and talk similarly, but a community of disciples following Jesus' way of life, working through conflict and spurring each other unto good works.

The New Testament picture of the church as a family confronts our individualistic cultural orientation. You may be surprised to discover that the expression "personal Saviour" occurs nowhere in the pages of Scripture. Consider Paul's perspective. In his letters, Paul refers to Jesus as "our Lord" — that is, as the Lord of God's group — 53 times. Only once, in contrast, does the expression "my Lord" appear in Paul's writings (Phil 3:8). Paul's driving passion was to establish spiritually vibrant, relationally healthy communities of believers in strategic urban settings throughout the Roman Empire.

The church through the years have progressed with the times. The church in the 1st century was primarily a home-based experience with a meal around a table as the focal point of the gathering. After the legalisation of Christianity under the Roman Emperor Constantine, elaborate cathedrals were built with altars in the centre. In the 16th century, after the Protestant reformation, churches were redesigned with the pulpit as the centre, as she made strides to return to the word of God. Today, with how big a role band music is playing in services, we see the stage being the main focal point of the Sunday experience.

Much of this development is well and good. But it is observable that as the church moved from being an experience around a table to a meeting around a stage, we have seen the church moved from being a family-based community into an audience.

Consider a pastor's rewriting of Acts 2:42-47 in light of our current cultural climate:

*"They studied the apostles teaching when they had time. They went to fellowship when they could fit it in. They prayed when they needed something and got coffee together every now and then. They were content without, and had low expectation for, signs and wonders in their midst. They sometimes talked about generosity but kept all of their possessions for themselves. 2 out of 5 Sundays they came to corporate gatherings. They didn't invite people into their homes and rarely revealed their hearts. They were largely irrelevant to all the people, and occasionally, someone was randomly saved."*

Modern society, despite its advancements, is plagued by fragmentation. Many individuals, who long for connection, end up marginalised, their gifts overlooked, their potential contributions lost. We need to recapture this vision of the church - not just a community, but a family.

### **Discussion Questions:**

1. Share any thoughts on this message.
2. What comes to your mind when you think about the word "family"?
3. Have you personally experienced the church as a family?
4. In the sermon, there were 3 shifts proposed: Commitment instead of Preference, Participation instead of Spectatorship and The Collective instead of the Individual. Do any of the shifts personally speak to or challenge you?

### **Exercise: How are we doing as a LifeGroup?**

1. Everyone takes turns to share about something they personally enjoyed about/were impacted in the LifeGroup. This could be a particular moment, trait of the group or a routine/ritual.
2. Anyone, as led to, may share something that they desire to see in the community. This is not the point to critic, judge or condemn. But rather, an avenue to express hopes and dreams, particularly in response to the idea of the church as a family.
3. Anyone (including the one that shared) to express if they can see themselves playing a role in seeing the above come to pass.
4. LifeGroup leader to take some time to cast vision and share frustrations, if any. Again, this is not a time to chide, critic or condemn but to express hopes and pain-points that may translate into areas of improvement/commitment. This could include, replying to texts, taking turns to host, informing attendance well ahead of time, committing to meals together, etc.
5. Group to end in a time of prayer for the community.